1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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of children's play. I observed only one organized game, a warlike one for boys, in which imitation spears were thrown at a target.

SEXUAL PLAY

Nights when the moon is full are the best playtime for children, as well as for adults. Then the children of both sexes may be found on the sandy beach playing at ritual dancing, or imitating adult life in their sexual play, which consists in the boy and girl standing very close together, the sexual organs of one touching those of the other, but not penetrating. It is usually done quite openly, in public, and the adults smile upon it and regard it as the natural order of things. This kind of play occurs from the age of about four. Occasionally a boy and girl will steal away into the bush for it, which is merely imitating the adult in more detail. The children have rather full knowledge since they sleep in the same room with their parents, the house consisting of only one room, and since all of life is discussed freely in front of them. Just as the adults of the same moiety may neither marry nor have any sex relations, so also a boy and girl of the same moiety may not indulge in sexual play. If this rule should be broken the children would be lectured, beaten, and thoroughly shamed.[1] The adults appear to be well aware of the laws of habit formation, and they take no chance on letting the children transgress an incest taboo even in play.

Early childhood is a careless and carefree time. Children are left to amuse themselves as they will, or they simply follow the adults and look on at their activities. An older brother or sister, parent, or grandparent, is always present to see that they come to no harm. As a whole, the children are in the background. They are given sufficient care to see that they do not fall into trouble, but they are not the centre of attention. For the most part they are onlookers and minor

[1] It did not happen, as far as I know, during my visit.

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than usual.[1] For a month before the appearance of the *beta* the children play a game called *tipuli*, which is almost the exact equivalent of our tug-of-war. The "rope" is a heavy vine from the bush, and the children at each end pull until one side gives way. A few nights before the *beta* is expected the adults also engage in this game, playing it a bit more seriously than the children, for whom it sometimes becomes a frolic. The natives say that the game symbolizes the pulling in of the *beta* from the sea.[2]

The *beta* was sighted by a young girl who, with other children, was on the reef that night looking for shell-fish. She cried out that the *beta* had come, and immediately there was much excitement. Everyone, men and women, rushed to the beach and out to the reef with their baskets, where they stayed for several hours gathering in the *beta*. When finally all the worms had been gathered in the baskets, everyone went to bed exhausted. But at daybreak they were up and bathing in the sea. They said that if they did not bathe in the sea after taking in the *beta*, their bodies would be marked with rings similar to those on the *beta*. On this occasion they should have bathed the night before, as soon as they finished getting in the *beta*, but they were too tired then, and had gone directly to bed, postponing the bathing until daybreak.[3]

The day following the catching of the *beta* was a busy one.

[1] The same marine annelid is found in other parts of the Pacific, particularly in the Samoan, Tongan, and Fijian groups. In Fiji it is called the *mbalolo*, and is found in October or November. These two months take their names from it, October being known as *Little Mbalolo*, and November as *Great Mbalolo*. Thompson, Basil, *The Fijians*, 1928. London, Wm. Heineman, pp. 324–327.

In a similar way at Lesu the names for certain months take their name from the *beta* (see p. 290).

[2] Because the *beta* appeared earlier than expected, the adults had not played the game of *tipuli*, and the children had only been playing it for four days.

[3] Ambwa, the next village, had no *beta*, for no one had sighted it. Having come a month earlier than expected, they had no look-out for it.